SPRING 2026

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW WILL HURT YOU!

VOLUME #1, ISSUE #2

“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.” - Angela Davis

"DOES SLU SEE GOD IN US?" - An Interview with DSLUE Executive Director Robin Proudie

To sign DSLUE's petition, scan the QR Code to the left.

If you are interested in joining Saint Louis University Enslaved Education and Commemoration Committee (SLUEECC), email robin.proudie@slu.edu

Saint Louis University has a long history of human rights abuses. From mistreatment of Sodexo workers, to brutalizing student protesters, this university has done a piss poor job of upholding our "Jesuit values." However, upon closer examination of these very values, clear issues emerge—issues that remain pertinent until the current day. Chief among them is the Society of Jesus' participation in the slave trade. As many of us know—or may not know—the Jesuits enslaved thousands of individuals throughout America, including the Jesuits who founded, "built," and managed SLU.

Our university is not one built on justice and "Catholic values," but on the brutality of human trafficking. Even our church, Saint Francis Xavier, was funded with the self-purchase fees—or "freedom fees"—of enslaved individuals looking to escape the grasp of Jesuit cruelty—a fact confirmed by both SLU's archives and from the executive director of Descendants of Saint Louis University Enslaved (DSLUE), Robin Proudie. In fact, it was her 3x great aunt, Matilda Tyler, whose "freedom fee" was directly appropriated for the construction of the church—a shameful stain on SLU's history.

However, calling it a "stain" is inaccurate; this practice was a feature, not a bug, of the Jesuits and their practices. To demean, discredit, and abuse not only those enslaved by them, but also the enslaved individual's descendants is an ongoing theme. Just this past month, for example, the university went back on plans to install a permanent memorial to those who were enslaved on SLU's campus, prompting the emergence of a petition by DSLUE. The QR code to this petition is at the top of this article. Because of these ongoing battles with the university, it was absolutely paramount to sit down with Robin to discuss not only the history of the university, but its current-day practices that perpetuate the same cruelty and disrespect the Jesuits once inflicted. This is that interview, unaltered, and ready for you

to absorb.

The Origin Of The Issue

"'99% of the descendants disagreed with the structure,' which disincluded monetary payments for descendants."

Starting from the beginning, Robin outlined to me the origins of DSLUE, the efforts undertaken by both the Jesuits and the university to study their participation in enslavement. While I could sum this up, I feel that it is absolutely necessary to hear this story in her own words. This is what Robin had to say:

Well, in a nutshell, Saint Louis University and the Society of Jesus came together to study their ties to slavery in 2016. Georgetown had already started that process in the university because the students pretty much demanded that they do that. Well, they had already started that process. So they contacted my family and me via an official letter from the Slavery, History, Memory, and Reconciliation Project (SHMR). If you Google that and say Jesuits or descendants with that title, you will find the Jesuits website where they talk about our families and all of that.

Well, the late Jonathan Smith was the person in charge of [this effort] at Saint Louis University. He had a team of researchers and they collaborated with the Jesuit team and they did this for three years, from 2016 to 2019, researched the

history and went into the archives all over St. Louis and—you know, the Jesuit archives, the archdiocese, you name it, anywhere there were enslaved people; and they found names and many of those names were of my Ancestors, my direct Ancestors, my grandmother's grandmother, who was born at Saint Louis University in 1844 along with her other four or five siblings and her grandfather and her mother were brought here from a Maryland Jesuit plantation called White Marsh in 1823, and in 1829...So they contacted us. I was still working for the federal government, living in Maryland at the time during COVID, and my elders, who were here in 2019, when they first reached out to us, met with Jonathan Smith and his team of researchers. They formed working groups, and they were going—they had different working groups that they were forming to talk about financial repair, scholarships, [and] different ways that they can make amends.

Robin, who was still living in Maryland at the time, did not join in these efforts at first. However, when the pandemic began to cause a global quarantine, knowing that her elders were not particularly tech savvy, she immediately contacted the researchers online to contribute digitally to the research. This research, undertaken with the help of the late Dr. Jonathan Smith, unveiled hundreds of documents relating to SLU's involvement in slavery, many of them referencing upwards of thirty of Robin's direct Ancestors. From early 2019 until its cessa-

tion, Robin contributed to this project—first online, and then in person during her various visits to the region. This all changed with Dr. Smith's passing in early 2021. With his passing, the momentum behind this project was lost, and a vacuum opened that needed to be filled—and filled it was, just not in any agreeable way. Robin explains:

I moved back to St. Louis in November 2022, and in 2023, that's when we formally became a non-profit, Descendants of the Saint Louis University Enslaved. Prior to me even moving here, me and several of my family members met with former President Pestello. That was on November 11,, 2021. This was after, unfortunately, Professor Smith passed...

At that time, in 2021, the Jesuits decided to halt the SHMR research that they had done together with SLU because they came up with their own brand of what they feel is reparations. They made a big announcement in 2021 that this is what they—they called it reparations themselves in CNN, if you google it. And so they came up—they had coordinated with the then, GU272 Descendants Association , their leadership, and together they launched the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation.

This foundation, though good in theory, proved to be nothing but a means to placate the descendants. According to Robin, "*99% of the descendants disagreed with the structure,*" which disincluded monetary payments for

descendants. They offered scholarships and emergency housing stipends for the "*elderly, sick, or infirm,*" but the bulk of any proceeds raised would not go to the roughly 10,000 descendants across the nation, but to entities whose mission is to "*eradicate racism,*" firmly placing that responsibility on the backs of the descendants, not on those who perpetuate it. Not only that, but from 2021 to 2024, the descendants of those enslaved at SLU were requesting meetings and more incorporation into the SLU community. Instead, they were being shuttled from one person to another, to different discovery meetings and committees, making it impossible to get any sort of progress toward true reparations. This was extremely disagreeable to the descendants and, as such, an alternative was formed: DSLUE.

The Origins Of DSLUE

"They didn't—they wanted the universities to put money into that foundation, and then usher all the descendants to that foundation. But many of us—like I told you—we didn't agree with that."

It is important to note that, while the formation of DSLUE may be viewed as a response to these events, in actuality, it was formed in an effort to build solidarity among the descendants. It was formed for

them to come together, to honor their Ancestors, to preserve their legacy, and to research and restore familial ties severed by slavery. The process of this formation was spelled out by Robin, who stated that:

...after three years (2021 to 2024) of going back and forth with these different committee meetings—and once we understood that we gave them time to find someone, and they did, and we were promised that we were going to come back together and look toward a pathway forward to reconciliation for the dehumanization of our Ancestors—these were the very words of President Pestello—and when there was a lot of inaction and some improper engagement by those who were in charge with us, we decided to host a teach-in, because we felt that a lot of the university didn't even know anything about this history.

...So, because there was nothing that took place from 2019 to 2024—nothing substantial— we decided to host that teach-in, and it went viral. And then the next day, we—the secretary of the board of trustees, Danielle Uy, who is also one of the attorneys for Saint Louis University, my legal advisor—who is an award winning civil-rights attorney—Areva Martin, myself, and Rochelle Smith met the next day after our viral meeting. And then from there, we set a plan; and we were excited because President Pestello appointed two descendant liaisons.

...We—those of us who were here, the leaders and the

board members of the descendants—met with our descendant liaisons, Nikki Roach and Allison Brewer. And we submitted our 10-point plan of what the descendants thought was a good start, and we all agreed that—including the descendant liaisons—we would present at each time the board would meet— the board of trustees—our three most important points of the 10-point remedies reparative justice plan. So, when the liaisons came back and let us know that the first point of our 10-point plan was approved to go forth—that's a formal apology for the enslavement of our Ancestors, which is a form of reparations...when they granted that, when they approved it, we were excited. We formed a working group—a 12-person working group in January 2025, [made up of] two descendants, and then the rest were SLU faculty, staff, and our descendant liaisons. Jesuit Suwalskyi, who is the dean of mission and identity, and other SLU staff or faculty who were—had a particular role to get this apology ceremony done. And we began planning it, and March 26 was the date, and we were super—we were ecstatic."

However, internal issues with the Society of Jesus became apparent early on. According to Robin:

...the Jesuits wanted all the universities—Jesuit universities—to let them do the reconciliation piece. They didn't—they wanted the universities to put money into that foundation, and then usher all the descendants to that foundation. But many of us—like I told you—we didn't agree with that.

This push from the Jesuits, while initially irrelevant to the actions of SLU, soon became a real issue when SLU's administration betrayed DSLUE in the most profound of ways.

The Betrayal: What Happened To SLU's Apology Event?

"You brought them through the back door and you disrespected us."

Many students, faculty, and community members alike were shocked and confused by DSLUE's pulling out of the aforementioned apology ceremony. SLU, with their concerns of bad PR, framed this event as a stepping stone—a natural roadblock that would soon be overcome. However, this framing neglects to recognize the very real harm carried out by the university in the organization of this event. Robin clarified these things during our interview, stating:

What happened was—why we pulled out the apology, the night before the ceremony was supposed to take place. They flew in some descendants who are not living here. We are gearing up. All of us have spent money on outfits, and this and that, and Saint Louis University said we were going to host a private reception in the St. Francis Xavier College Church basement, and it was going to be beautiful. I'm sure Saint

Louis University spent thousands of dollars on that.

On March 18, a week before the event, in the last apology planning meeting, I noticed on the program— because I've been there throughout the whole time...I noticed they added something, it said "Jesuit Apology Reflection," and they added an announcement that the descendant liaisons were going to make; and I inquired about it, and this was the last meeting a week before [the event]. And they said "Well,"—the descendant liaisons both said—"Well, we can't say because we submitted something to the board of trustees, and we're waiting on their approval. Once they approve it, or once they give [tell us] how to proceed, then, Robin, we can tell you."

I felt baffled about that, because I was the representative for the descendants and part of this working group. Here, I thought to act on behalf of descendants—roughly 227 locally here in St. Louis. Evidently, decisions were being made for us, not with us. It's called parity. It's called centering the descendants.

So when you submit something that has something to do with us without telling the descendants, it's not for us, it's for you. Well, [I was like] let me know when you can let me know, because I can't force them to tell me.

So that Friday, they had a meeting, and I said, "Well, what's going on?" And they told me that the board of trustees made a decision—not on the 10-point plan, but on what their commitment is going to be, period, right? The agreement that

we made the entire summer of 2024 leading up to this process—that each one of our points on our 10-point plan will be brought before the Trustees each quarter to have a robust conversation...and then decide each step of the way—that whole process was out the door.

They agreed on a monument and apology, a formal report, and some other initiatives like curriculum development. They didn't mention scholarships. They didn't mention a cash payment or entrepreneurial economic empowerment endeavors, fundraising together...none of the things that we asked for. And we were taken aback because we felt like "Who submitted this proposal?" And it wasn't us. We didn't have an opportunity to weigh in on what they submitted before they submitted it to the board. They did it behind the scenes.

...So we requested a meeting. We—some of the descendants were already scheduled to attend a lunch at SLU and visit the archives on the day before the event, on Tuesday, March 25. SLU agreed to turn that into a meeting so we could voice our concerns. That was on Wednesday afternoon,... and in that meeting was the speech writer for President Pestello, Kasi Williamson, and the assigned descendant liaisons, Nicole Roach and Alison Brewer, then DICE VP, Rochelle Smith along with about seven or eight DSLUE descendants, myself included. There were other leaders in attendance. . So we went back and forth, and they said,"Well, we'll change some language and...we'll add [ways] that we can work to-

gether with the descendants to help them achieve their goals with the university's resources." Both parties walked out of that afternoon meeting with an agreement to move forward with the Apology Ceremony. Although they were side-swiping us left and right with their last minute intentional holding, we—like my family, done for the last six years—swallowed their nonsense for the sake of progress; and because we know our Creator will fight our battles, we have work to do. We left the meeting accepting their offer.

At 10:30 p.m. that night, we received the final program, the Apology language, and the Pathway Forward announcement that descendant liaisons Nicole Roach and Allison Brewer were scheduled to make. Descendants were stunned to see that Father Tim Kesicki, COO of the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation (DTRF), an individual none of DSLUE members had ever met, was referenced throughout the program.

Former President Pestello referenced Father Kesicki and the DTRF in his apology language. Roach and Brewer referenced Fr. Kesicki in the formal announcement. Finally, to our shock and dismay Fr, Kesecki was incorporated into the Apology program itself, He was scheduled to conduct the closing prayer alongside DSLUE descendant Elder, Pastor Gregory Holley. Not even the late Jonathan Smith, who spearheaded this work was mentioned until the end. They obviously had an agenda and didn't want us to know about it. Why?

The Hijacking of the Apology

"DSLUE stood to lose credibility with over 2,500 descendants across the Jesuit enslavement diaspora whom we stand with in solidarity...With this knowledge and seeing what was going on in the midnight hour with this event. We refused to allow our Ancestors souls to witness us being exploited in such a way."

Clearly, there were ulterior motives at play on SLU's part. It is no wonder, then, hat came next. This despicable betrayal was outlined by Robin, who stated:

Trust eroded to no return at 10:30 p.m. that night, when we finally received the Apology program, the Pathway Forward announcement document that the liaisons were set to say, and the Apology that former President Fred Pestello was going to make. We were shocked to learn, for the first time, that in all three of those official documents, Father Tim Kesicki, COO of the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation (DTRF)—an individual none of DSLUE members had ever met prior to the apology ceremony—was referenced throughout. In former President Fred Pestello's formal apology to descendants, Kesicki and DTRF were referenced. He was referenced in the announcement Roach and Brewer were going to make; and, unbelievably, Father Kesicki was incorporated into our Apology program to be held the next day.

and without our knowledge. In the meeting earlier that day, I mentioned that we didn't affiliate with DTRF.

I served on the 12-member apology planning working group and was included in all aspects of the apology planning—except this one and the submitting of the offer to the Board. For over two years, I informed Nicole Roach, Michelle Smith, and Allison Brewer on several occasions that DSLUE—including all 227 known descendants—did not affiliate with DTRF. During the time of the ceremony, DSLUE was aware of the internal problems the DTRF was experiencing with our cousin organization, the GU272 Descendants Association. The GU272 association is the initial descendant's group who signed an MOU with DTRF. Those internal issues subsequently led to descendants resigning from DTRF's Board of Trustees and severing ties completely. The GU272 organization has since rebranded to a new name, Descendants United. We all stand in solidarity along them and with many descendant communities across the nation.

DSLUE stood to lose credibility with over 2,500 descendants across the Jesuit enslavement diaspora whom we stand with in solidarity. Some had traveled to attend this historic event. With this knowledge, and seeing what was going on in the midnight hour with this event, we refused to allow our Ancestors' souls to witness us being exploited in such a way. We won't allow them to take credit for the years of hard work and money we've spent getting us here.

DSLUE cannot allow the years of hard work, grace, and willingness to collaborate that we have shown to be minimized. Nor can we allow it to be implied that descendants simply pulled out of a hard-won Apology ceremony without cause, or that we refused the University's offer. That is not what happened, and we will not let anyone mis-characterize the facts of this process. Descendants deserve our voices to be heard and facts to be on the record.

...It was around 10:30 that night—the day before the apology ceremony—when, finally, Nicole Roach sent us the official confidential documents...There were three documents. The first consisted of what he (President Pestello) was going to say in the apology, [then] The Pathway Forward document, which contained the announcement the liaisons were going to make—which entailed what the commitment of the university was—and it had the official program.

Now, number one, we were actually going to go through with it, and felt that this was a good start. At least it had a monument to honor our Ancestors, because first and foremost, had it not been for them, what they went through...we wanted them to be acknowledged. So we were happy that they were going—that the university committed to a permanent memorial on the campus of Saint Louis University and an official report...We were going to work together, but this was a start. So we were actually going to go ahead, even though they didn't do the correct process—the agreed-upon process—we

were still going to move forward with it. But then we looked at the program, and we looked at what President Pestello was going to say—which some parts were beautiful...the program had Father Tim Kesicki on there doing a prayer service with my cousin, who is a pastor.

Now, for three years, I've told Nikki Roach—Alison Brewer for two years, cause that's when they came on board two years ago—and Rochelle Smith, the day I met her...in the first meeting we had, I explained to her exactly what I explained to you about the Jesuit's answer, the foundation. [I said] that we don't agree with the foundation structure. We feel that it doesn't—it's not in our best—it's in the Jesuits' interest, not in ours, and that we don't have anything against them. We just do not ascribe to what they call reparations.

So when they put Father Kesicki... the CEO of the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation, who—number one, we've never met Father Tim Kesicki. Now I know who he is because I'm also in several other descendant groups where we have had meetings with him, or he has come and talked to convince descendants to, you know, do whatever. I know who he is, but I've never met him.

He's been in St. Louis. He's never once called the descendants. When we worked for four years to get this apology, they had his name on the program. They incorporated him behind our backs. They never told me that they were meeting with him and the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation

Foundation, and that they had invited them, or that they had allowed them to be a part of the program.

...I have four other descendant groups that I'm a part of, and all were very excited about the progress that we had made, and we're all in agreement with what reparations look like to us, and they know that none of us agree with the foundation. So imagine I'm talking to them the day before, and they're excited. Some are even coming to attend the apology.

Then Father Tim Kesicki is in our program, unbeknownst to us, but it would look like we co-signed that, and we did not get the opportunity [to do so]...So it just broke down trust because I didn't understand—just give us dignity. You could have saved the university thousands of dollars, because if you would have told us [that] this is what you were doing, then we would have had an opportunity to say yes or no. "No, thank you. We don't want to proceed at this time," or "Yes, we'll go ahead on," but we didn't get that.

...And mind you, prior to that, several people told me that there was tension between Saint Louis University, the Society of Jesus, and that foundation. That's because they wanted to control the narrative...They want to do the reconciliation piece, and because SLU went ahead on their own, they decided, "Well, since they're going to do it anyway, we might as well try to be a part of it,"...Also, I believe [it was] because of the Trump administration that year, during that time in January, they were in SLU ear, saying "See, see, I told you,

you guys better let us handle this because Trump is messing with the universities—with their funding!"

...So that's where they decided to change it, which is perfectly fine with us when they said, "We're going to change it to a prayer service," and then they said an apology is going to take place. I understood the political climate; my family understood. So we didn't have an issue with that. You could call it whatever you want to call it, as long as we get an apology; as long as we move forward with progress, we were not here to tear the university down. We were actually proud of the university and were looking forward to many things.

...This is hellish. This is ridiculous. I don't have enough words...Let me tell you what happened. I just couldn't take it no more, so we said we could not. I asked my family—I said, "What do you guys want to do?" They said, "No, we're not there. They're not being genuine. They went behind our backs, and we don't want them to get a photo op."

See, and that's what it is; because the foundation is in the reparations business...So if they get DSLUE, who is the one descendant organization now that is popular and getting a lot of press, they're going to get a photo op with my cousin, and Kesickii is going to take that and float it around to the Catholic people and everything, so they can generate funds. But not one time did they call us and say, "Congratulations. We have this descendant organization too, and we want to meet you!" Not one time.

After the apology date, I called Father Tim Kesicki two days later because I wanted to understand how he could do that. I [also] called Monique Maddox, who was from the foundation and a descendant from New Orleans...I called them, and we had a meeting. At first, I asked Father Kesicki—I said, "Why didn't you just call me? Why didn't anyone sit us down with respect and say, 'Robin, would you like to meet the liaisons from SLU? Would you like to meet with Father Kesicki? They would like to meet you. They would like [us] to work together.' Nobody gave us the dignity to say yay or nay." I said to SLU liaisons, "You don't know what I'd say. You—you took the opportunity from me to influence the foundation to maybe do more. They—you took that opportunity where [they might say] 'You want to be a part? Let's do something more tangible. We can work together.' You didn't give me the opportunity to even do that. You took it away. You brought them through the back door and disrespected us."

...So anyways, that's what happened with SLU...we didn't do the apology. They put in the press that we were going to continue, but we just realized that we need more engagement with the descendants. After that, we were supposed to—Nikki and our liaisons—were supposed to come together to have a conversation to talk about the breakdown. And I said, "We need to understand who made the decisions that you guys made. Why did you guys do what you did? You know, we could have saved you guys the embarrassment," and

this and that and the other. But they never did come together to have that meeting. The liaison said that they need time to regroup. Everybody was kind of upset—they couldn't believe the apology didn't take place. I said, "We can't believe it either."

Current Day Disrespect: Does SLU See God in The Descendants & their Ancestors

"Nikki looked at me and said, 'The board of trustees never approved a monument or a permanent memorial on the campus of SLU.' Looked me dead in my face."

After a mistake as grand as this, you'd think that the university would reconsider its conduct when dealing with the descendants. In that case, you'd think wrong. Since the cancellation of the apology ceremony, SLU has repeatedly neglected, disrespected, and disregarded both the descendants as individuals and DSLUE as a whole. Robin explains this series of unfortunate events best, stating:

President Pestello was getting ready to retire. They told us that they set up a truth, healing, and reconciliation phone line, and an email said [that] from now on, this is where the

communication is going to come through. Perfect. I guess they want to make sure to keep records of what's really going on, which I think is great.

Pestello donated a statue to the university before he retired—the Pestellos did. So we got correspondence from Nikki Roach through the official channel, telling us about the statue; that he's donated [it], and she wanted to affirm to us that that statue is not—it's just a small statue too...but it's beautiful—she affirmed in writing that the statue is not the university's commitment to reconciliation and honoring our Ancestors. [She said that] we're going to come back in the summer and start engaging to do this work and establishing the permanent memorial

...This was approved by the executive board committee on behalf of the full board. Those are the confidential documents we have for what they committed to, where they talk about a permanent memorial on the campus of Saint Louis University, and all this other stuff, which is foundational to this work. And it's going to be in conjunction—it's going to be together with the descendants and the SLU community, and it's approved by the board. It's on two documents. And then after the apology, she affirmed that [the Pestello's] statue is not the one that the university committed to.

So that's that. So we're still waiting. It's a whole year later. President Feser has come on board. Even in his inauguration, he talks about moving forward...You can see the

speech cause he talks about moving forward with this work. We were excited about that.

...What's going on now is, it's January, February, March. So my legal counsel, Reva Martin, and Stephen Hanlon, who is a former law professor here at SLU—he's a SLU alum, and he's on our team, and he was one of the attorneys who won the settlement from the Rosewood case...

...And so he contacted them via letter saying that he knows a lot of alumni who would like to support these efforts with the descendants. [He said] "What can we do to help? I even have $10,000." He sent the letter to the president, and then it was routed to Nikki Roach, who is now—I guess she's working out of his office. She did respond, and Professor Hanlon said they had a conversation for 45 minutes. She was supposed to call us back and set up a meeting, but she never did. That was in February.

So, two years ago, I submitted a proposal for a headstone for my great-great-grandmother—who was born at SLU—Henrietta Mills, who was the first record that Saint Louis University found when they started doing this research. They found her communion record when she was 10 years old, from 1855. She's buried in Calvary Cemetery in an unmarked grave, and I wanted to get her a headstone. Her husband, who was enslaved by a local fur trader's wife, was buried in Trinity Cemetery, which is now defunct. They took those bones of our Ancestors and put them in a mass grave at Calvary.

So I asked her [if she] would help pay? Georgetown gave me a grant, and I needed some more money to [do it]. Rochelle Smith agreed, and she funded the headstone. So when the headstone finally came in, and they installed it, I thought it would be a great opportunity for us to come together and do something together again. So I reached out to Rochelle back in March and asked if they would like to—we're going to honor her, would they like to collaborate with DSLUE? Rochelle was like, "We will be honored to do that." So that's how we came together to have a meeting on April 13th: because we were coming together to plan the June 28th headstone dedication. I wanted it to be on their anniversary. They got married then, when she was 16, and he was 19, at the old St. Francis Xavier College Church in 1860; so I wanted it to be on their anniversary, June 28th, and I got a double headstone with both of their names on there because we don't know where his body is.

...And so while we were [at the meeting], I wanted to inquire into when we were going to come together to start establishing the monument that the Board of Trustees had approved. I asked her that question, and Nikki looked at me and said, "The board of trustees never approved a monument or a permanent memorial on the campus of SLU." Looked me dead in my face. I literally...I do suffer from anxiety. I'm a disabled veteran. I literally had an anxiety attack, but I calmed myself. I just shut down, and I calmed myself down, and I

just stared at her because I—I'm totally thinking we're almost getting ready to start this process again, because it's been a whole year. You said, "Wait until after the president comes on board." We waited patiently.

...Here I am, being looked at in the face and told that they never approved a monument or a memorial, and I said, "What?" Then she looked at me because I guess she saw the distress in my face. She started stuttering and said, "Well, we can talk about it!"

...So when she said that, it said to me [that] she just doing what—they [were] just doing what she wants, and she's now in control and she—she ain't even thought about it! She's working on a strategic plan, and we ain't nowhere to be found. If I hadn't initiated our engagement, we wouldn't have even been in that. They wouldn't—why we were in that meeting is because I initiated engagement, something collaborative. Even after what they did to us, I still...because it's bigger than my feelings. The patriarch of my family, who went and met [Pestello] with me—he was 82 years old when we went and met President Pestello in 2021—he is now on dialysis. I was just wanting him to see something now. Pestello has—he—when he left, he got a street named after him. We don't have anything.

...So anyway, long story short—when she said that, it broke my spirit a little bit, because I'm thinking "We're here and they ain't even thinking about us." So I ran home. I came

home, I told my legal counsel, I told my family members, and I was like, "What?"

So I got the information. I got the official documents that she sent us, [that] I got even after the apology—how she reaffirmed that we're going to come and start this process, the commitments that they made...And I emailed her, and I gave her out. I said, "Did I misinterpret what you said? I just want you to clarify what you meant by the board." And then I submitted the documents with the board approval. I submitted the—I submitted the other emails, subsequent emails with her reaffirming that we move forward. I sent her that, and I said, "Can you please [let us know]."...And she never said nothing.

But listen, listen, yesterday (4/22/26)...I got an email from her...She basically said that they are—they too are excited about coming together, doing the dedication together, and that "I agree that we should be on the same page." She said, "Thank you for your thoughtful message. We share in your excitement for the upcoming ceremony of the installation of the headstone honoring Charles and Henrietta Mills. It will be a meaningful, sacred moment. I appreciate you seeking clarification regarding the path forward, your understanding, and the importance of alignment in this work. I will follow up soon with additional clarity to ensure we have a shared understanding of the commitments, the process ahead, and how we continue this work that honors both truth and partnership." That's the last thing I got. And that was one day ago."

What To Do Now

"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." - prominent anti-nazi dissident and theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

With all of this information, it can be hard to know what to do now. I'm here to tell you that there's only one thing you're not allowed to do: nothing. Silence in the face of evil is itself evil—do not succumb to apathy. Here's what you need to do instead of nothing: sign DSLUE's petition. Email all people involved in this and demand both answers and action. Share this information with your fellow classmates, professors, and peers. Just don't sit idly. Don't sit and wait and watch as the university that you chose to attend disrespects the descendants of the very people who built it, ran it, and who are responsible for its "greatness." As stated at the beginning, a QR code to DSLUE's petition, along with information on how to join Robin's new DSO, Saint Louis University Enslaved Education and Commemoration Committee (SLUEECC), is located directly above the beginning of this article. I implore you to take action. The more signatures DSLUE receives, the more strength they will have; and the more prospective members join SLUEECC, the faster the organization can

become chartered by the university. At the very least, don't forget that you walk the grounds their Ancestors tended, against their will. When you go to the campus church, remember how it was built. Above all, do not remain complacent.

Time, Place, and Political Education: Engaging the Brown Conscience

"No estudiamos con el propósito de acumular conocimientos estáticos y sin contenido humano. Nuestra causa como estudiantes es la del conocimiento militante; refuta y transforma, revoluciona la realidad social, política, cultural, científica. No se engañen las clases dominantes: ¡Somos una Revolución! Esta es nuestra bandera." - Profe. José Revueltas, Mexican revolutionary thinker, essayist, and poet.

Political education is neither a passive nor a disconnected act, nor is it an unimportant aspect of our praxis — our political actions. José Revueltas teaches us that the duty of the student is not simply to "accumulate static knowledge with no human element," it is to develop a "militant consciousness, to refute and to transform, and to revolutionize our social, political, cultural,

and scientific reality."

For the community organizer and the revolutionary, theory is praxis and praxis is theory. It is impossible to build grassroots people power without understanding your own community and developing a framework grounded in the lived realities of the people you are working in solidarity with. If you are privileged enough to receive an education, it is your responsibility to educate your community and inspire in them a hunger for change.

Just as on-the-ground organizing is a constantly shifting playing field, political education must not be stagnant; it must meet the masses where they are and appeal to their conscience in ways they can intimately understand. We must speak in the language of the oppressed in every sense. If our community is predominantly Spanish-speaking and largely undereducated, we must speak to them in a comprehensible way, in Spanish.

Many outsiders enter Brown communities with good intentions and grand ideas to impose upon them, and in doing so, these white leftists perpetuate cycles of colonial violence. We must have an acute understanding of the concrete reality of our community and what is most realistic, relevant, and practical to educate about at that moment. Our people have an innate wisdom that

is only given through struggle and hardship, rather than academia or intellectualism, and we must learn from them just as much as they learn from us.

A room of undocumented people doesn't need a lecture on Marxism-Leninism and the Bolshevik Revolution, nor do they care to listen to a white person talk about a dead white man. They need advice from immigration attorneys, mutual aid drives, English language classes, and self and community defense trainings on how to prevent arrest, de-arrest, and resist state-sponsored terrorism against migrants. They must also be listened to as experts on their own lived experiences so that they are galvanized to direct their own liberation.

Only when the material needs of the people are met can they begin to shift their attention to philosophizing about political theory that speaks to their lived experiences and backgrounds. Brown people become engaged when they are taught their pre-colonial and revolutionary histories from their own people. Don't try to teach them about Marx and Engels; have them listen to the speeches of Che Guevara and Corky Gonzales. Give them lessons of the Zapatista Revolt from the mouth of Comandanta Ramona herself. Show them the work of the Young Lords, Brown Berets, and American Indian Movement. Put up images of autonomous Indigenous communities that militantly defend their ancestral

homelands from U.S.-sponsored narco violence. The theories of european political philosophers are white interpretations of Indigenous knowledge. Instead of directing them toward something foreign, redirect them to the ancestral wisdom of our elders, both present and historical. Remind them of their inherent capacity for community autonomy and teach from the source.

Political education is only effective when it centers the voices and the histories of the people it seeks to educate. It will always fall short if it seeks to impose rather than inspire. Show the community a reflection of themselves, connect it to their present struggles, and you will see a shift in how they respond to political education.

CBP "Removed" From SLU's Career Fair: Appeasement or Progress?

In late January of this year, students became aware of the planned presence of Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) at SLU's career fair. Almost immediately, outrage erupted, followed by a wildly successful petition calling for the removal of the agency. Within a week and a half, it was announced that they would not be in attendance, and the university community rejoiced.

However, with all the celebration, multiple key points of information were missed—information that demonstrates that this is a temporary win. For meaningful change to occur, further action must be taken—and the first step is awareness.

SLU's community is comprised largely of international students—22% of the university community, to be exact. Not only that, but SLU is a Jesuit university that follows Catholic teachings—namely, the teaching that every migrant "...possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone in every circumstance," (Caritas in Veritate, 2009). Why, then, have numerous student reports and an anonymous inside source confirmed that CBP has consistently attended past career fairs? While finding archived information of past career fair attendees is next to impossible, Matt Goodwin, associate provost for Career Services, clearly stated that CBP has participated in numerous past events in an article for UNews (Farwig, 2026). Beyond this instance, however, evidence of SLU's support for the organization is plain to see on their resource pages.

QR CODE LINKING TO SLU ARTICLE SUPPORTING CBP, ICE, ETC

One key example of SLU's

long-lasting support for CBP—and "immigration enforcement" in general—is the blog post "10 Types of Homeland Security Careers Worth Considering." Published on October 25th, 2023, this post aims to funnel SLU students into numerous careers within the Department of Homeland Security, namely Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), CBP, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Starting with USCIS, SLU proudly proclaims that it "...aims to uphold America's promise as a nation of welcome and possibility with fairness, integrity, and respect for all it serves." Going further down, it explicitly lists "immigration officer" as a viable career option for SLU students, disregarding not only the absurdity of a student of Catholic teachings being responsible for facilitating deportations, but also the hundreds of reports of physical and sexual abuse against migrants at the hands of USCIS's immigration officers—reports that have previously been withheld from both Human Rights Watch and the American Immigration Council (American Immigration Council, 2021).

Moving onto CBP, SLU describes it as "...one of the world's largest law enforcement organizations..." that "...operates with the goal of facilitating lawful international travel and trade, while focusing on counter terrorism and transnational crime. CBP takes a com-

prehensive approach to border management and control, combining customs, immigration, border security and agricultural protection into one coordinated effort," (Saint Louis University, 2023). While all of that seems fine and good, the reality is far from it. CPB is responsible—either directly or through neglect—for a minimum of 367 deaths since January 2010, 78 of the victims being minors. This number neglects to take into consideration the deaths that follow CBP's intervention, such as the hundreds of individuals killed in detention centers. Additionally, this number is unable to portray the depravity undertaken by CBP officers. Human Rights Watch's 2021 report "'They Treat You Like You Are Worthless': Internal DHS Reports of Abuses by US Border Officials," (Human Rights Watch, 2021) sheds light on this depravity, highlighting the numerous instances of physical and sexual violence—often perpetrated against young girls—that run rampant within the organization. Clearly, this is no place for a SLU student with any sense of morality.

Finally, when it comes to ICE, SLU has no qualms describing it positively. The blog post states "Those who work for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) commit to the mission of protecting America from cross-border crime and illegal immigration in an effort to preserve national security and public safe-

ty," (Saint Louis University, 2023). Not only does the concept of prosecuting undocumented immigration go against Jesuit values, but referring to it as "illegal immigration" is diminutive, offensive, and dehumanizing. No Jesuit institution should even insinuate that a person's life can be "illegal," but yet here SLU is, compromising their principles to support an organization responsible for inflicting a reign of terror onto our communities, killing citizens and non-citizens alike.

With all this information readily available on SLU's website, it will come as no surprise to know that this "removal" of CBP from the career fair was nothing but a farce. While some media outlets reported that SLU chose to remove CBP, this is a falsehood. In an article with Inside Higher Ed, Clayton Berry, assistant vice president for communications at SLU, clarified that the university didn't disinvite CBP—CBP chose to uncommit to the event to avoid student backlash. The question, then, is why the university allowed us to believe that they had removed CBP for so long, never issuing a statement to the contrary. Clearly, it was an act to save face, but it was also to avoid revealing their true plans.

According to the same aforementioned anonymous inside source, the university does indeed plan to invite CBP back at a later date. This claim is corroborated by the numerous statements made by university officials,

all of which overtly or covertly imply that CBP will be back. For example, Matt Goodwin, associate provost for Career Services, stated in an article for UNews that he was "...hopeful that once we get back to a sense of ensuring safety with our college students and get past the challenging situations we've seen in the country with border protection....there's going to be a border protection and I'm confident that the agency needs SLU students." Even more damning, when Jeffrey Jackson, associate provost for career development, was asked explicitly if he would've disinvited the organization, he had no comment (Farwig, 2026). Clearly, then, the university will not act on its own accord to prevent CBP's return; we must make a stand.

If SLU truly represents the Jesuit values it claims to, this inaction and deference to evil will not stand. The university does not deserve a single second of peace until its standards are corrected, better policies are put into place, and students are heard. While there is no clear-cut solution to this problem, the first step is awareness. So, we implore you to share this article. Do not forget about this when next year's career fair comes around, or the one after that. Don't let these forces of depravity take further hold of our campus. Be the one to try to stop it; that is the only way forward.

Works Cited

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WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW WILL HURT YOU!